alternatives

comprehensive management plan

october 1979

1. phone - regular rate 3 mo
   vocation - the rest - can call out - not call in
2. Bill Tweed - naturalist.
   write letters - ask Tweed to stay
   David Thompson - Parks Headquarters - letter
- Kennedy - not on list -

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON

MINERAL KING

NATIONAL PARKS / CALIFORNIA

2023.009.0314

United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Planning for Mineral King is progressing. The public workshops held in late April and early May of this year identified a range of issues to be addressed and opportunities to be explored in this endeavor. Since then, the planning team has developed four alternative plans containing many of the ideas that surfaced in those workshops and in subsequent correspondence with individuals and organizations. Now we ask your comments and recommendations concerning these alternatives.

While the alternatives suggest several approaches, they do not contain all of the specifics necessary for formulation of a comprehensive management plan. We are contacting you at this juncture to be sure that the direction indicated in the various alternatives incorporates your concerns and desires.

After considering all of your comments, we will prepare a draft comprehensive management plan with a recommended alternative. The recommended alternative may be one of the alternatives presented here, or it may combine elements from the various alternatives. Thank you for your assistance in helping make Mineral King an area suited to the needs of the citizens who use it today and an enjoyable place for those who will use it in the future. Your comments on these alternatives may be sent to this address.

Mineral King Planning Team
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Ash Mountain
Three Rivers, California 93271
Telephone (209) 565-3341

2028.009.0314 b

Responses – Dec. ~~17~~ 17 – deadline

Bill requires PS abide by public opinion as expressed in letters.

To be printed to Congress – by Nov. 1980

Time Value ——— Urgent

ALTERNATIVES FOR MANAGEMENT

of

MINERAL KING

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Influences on Planning / 1

Issues Considered / 5

Alternatives / 7

2022.009.0314 a

INFLUENCES ON PLANNING

The following legislative intent and policy directives have guided the management of Mineral King in the absence of an approved comprehensive management plan. The planning effort for Mineral King is directed towards achieving or maintaining these basic goals.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Mineral King was transferred from the administration of the U.S. Forest Service to National Park Service jurisdiction by passage of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-625). This act added Mineral King to Sequoia National Park, to be administered as a district within that park. The intent of Congress was to insure the preservation of the outstanding natural and scenic features of Mineral King for present and future generations and to enhance public enjoyment of the area.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The principles of management for areas within Sequoia National Park have been extensively developed and defined as approved management objectives in the park's *Statement for Management.* *

Restore and/or maintain the natural ecosystems so that ecological processes may be perpetuated and may operate in a relatively undisturbed manner.

Provide quality opportunities for visitor understanding and enjoyment of the area's resources.

Eliminate all incompatible uses.

Cooperate with other agencies and outside interests in the development of plans and major management programs.

Maintain a high level of visitor and employee protection through effective programs in law enforcement, safety management, and public health.

Limit National Park Service and concession development to that which is necessary and appropriate for the public use and enjoyment of this area, and eliminate or relocate facilities that intrude on the primary resources.

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*Only selected management objectives are repeated here. For a complete list, consult the *Statement for Management* for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

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ZONES

- ALPINE/SUBALPINE
- MIXED CONIFER
- SEQUOIA
- CHAPARRAL/OAK WOODLAND

north

0 3 miles
0 5 kilometers

ENVIRONMENTS*

SEQUOIA/KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

* BASED ON VEGETATION TYPE MAPS BY HAMMON, JENSEN AND WALLEN (1977), NATURAL RESOURCES MGT. CORP. (1974) AND SOIL-VEGETATION SURVEY MAP, BY U.S. FOREST SERVICE (1971).

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ISSUES CONSIDERED

The following are the principal issues that generated significant discussion at the public workshops.

VISITOR USE

The primary emphasis in this planning effort has been the development of alternatives for visitor use – the types of activities that might occur and the scale at which they might be accommodated. The bases for developing the different visitor use alternatives were the various concerns expressed at the public workshops, traditional use opportunities, potential environmental and social impacts, and legal and policy constraints.

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DEVELOPMENT

The facilities necessary for support of visitor activities are an integral part of each alternative. At this stage of the planning process, the need for facilities has been identified and locations have been tentatively zoned. Criteria used in formulating the alternative development plans were public concerns, environmental constraints and impacts, aesthetics, site suitability, and cost.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As a district within Sequoia National Park, Mineral King is subject to the resource management goals and objectives developed and approved in the *Natural Resources Management Plan* for the park. Many of the objectives of that plan are relevant to management of resources at Mineral King, including the management of vegetation, fire, wildlife, aquatic resources, roads and trails, and wilderness areas. However, certain resources need to be given special consideration independent of the park's management plan. These include the Mineral King deer herd, the alpine caves, and the four alpine lakes that have been dammed for power generation. Basic information regarding these resources is currently being gathered, and options for their management will be dependent upon the determinations of these ongoing studies.

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

In the initial public workshops and in subsequent correspondence, people frequently expressed their concerns for an examination of public transportation systems or for an analysis of alternate access routes. During the course of the Forest Service's planning effort, various transportation options were explored. The data generated by the Forest Service provided a foundation for the formulation of transportation alternatives and will continue to be valuable as planning progresses. Primary criteria considered were cost, environmental impacts, safety, capacity, and legal and policy constraints.

DOWNHILL SKIING

Consideration of downhill skiing as a possible activity is constrained by legislation. As stated in Public Law 95-625, "the Congress recognizes that the Mineral King Valley area has outstanding potential for certain year-round recreational opportunities, but the development of permanent facilities for downhill skiing within the area would be inconsistent with the preservation and enhancement of its ecological values." Consequently, downhill skiing is not included in any of the alternatives.

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ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives are presented for consideration and review. Alternative A, no action, indicates only those modifications necessary to meet health, safety, and welfare standards. Alternatives B and C reflect many of the ideas and comments generated in the public meetings. Under these two alternatives, the inherent direction would be to retain the traditional character and density of use that presently exists in Mineral King. The experience offered to visitors would be in contrast to the experience offered at the more intensively developed and used areas of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Alternative D would complement the developed areas of the two parks and would accommodate a national visitor population. In this alternative the area would be developed at a scale similar to the other major features of Sequoia and Kings Canyon.

For the presentation of alternatives, the area has been divided into several subdistricts, including the valley proper, Faculty Flat, Silver City, Cabin Cove, and Atwell Mill. Reference can be made to the accompanying graphic for clarification of these areas. In all alternatives the valley proper has been treated as the outstanding feature and the primary resource and attraction of the area.

ALTERNATIVE A

Objective

To modify existing conditions only as required to meet minimum health, safety, or welfare standards

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Strategy

This alternative includes only those actions that must be undertaken for compliance with required codes. These actions could be implemented in a minimal period of time and with minimal investment. The primary emphasis would be on upgrading existing utility systems to mitigate potential health problems. However, if upgrading required substantial investment, the facility would be removed rather than rehabilitated.

Actions

Valley Proper:	Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record
	Retain parking areas and pack station in present locations
Faculty Flat:	Upgrade utility systems serving the ranger station and the Cold Spring campground
	Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record
Silver City:	Upgrade utility system serving Silver City as necessary
	Acquire private lands, granting options of life tenancy or 25-year estates if desired
Cabin Cove:	Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record
Atwell Mill:	Retain the campground
Hammond:	Continue present signing
Road:	Oil the unpaved portion to reduce dust problems

Long term parking - Wisher Flat at Silver City
Walk in camps Upper valley?

Impacts

Natural Environment: Implementation of this alternative would not cause any significant new impact to occur. Upgrading of sewer systems would improve surface water quality. Otherwise, the impacts presently associated with development and human use would continue.

Visitor Use: No change would occur in the numbers of visitors accommodated or the types of activities provided for. Upgrading of sewer and water systems to comply with health codes would protect visitors from possible public health hazards by alleviating bacteriological and nutrient contamination. Traditional winter use of the area would continue unchanged, with no facilities or services provided for winter visitors.

Picnic area not needed
? Redwood Grove – atwells Mill

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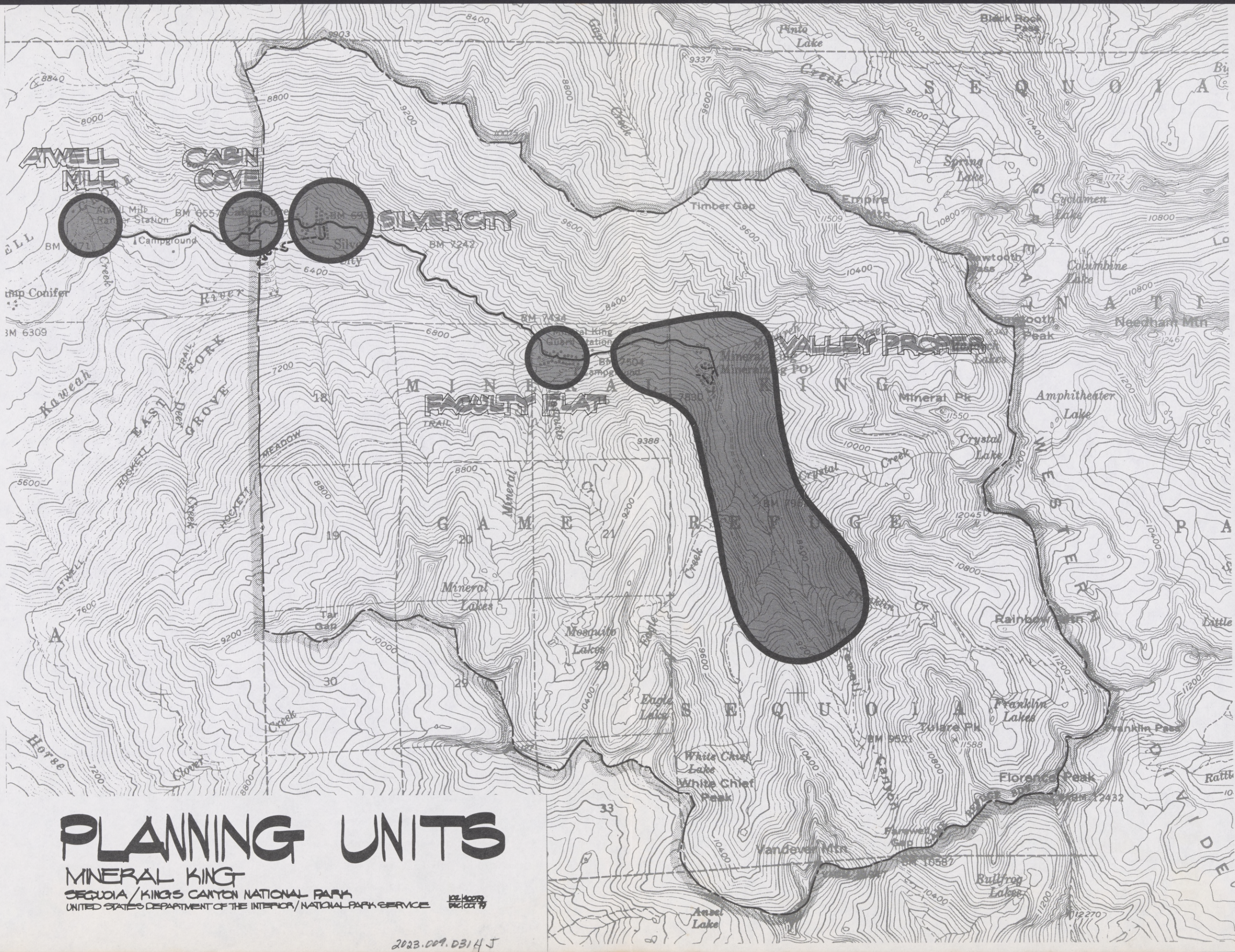

PLANNING UNITS

MINERAL KING

SEQUOIA / KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Transportation and Access: Oiling the unpaved portion of the road would reduce dust problems during the summer use season. No change would occur in existing circulation patterns or in the method of access.

Private Lands and Permittee Cabins: Private lands and permittee cabins would be governed by legislation. Private lands would be acquired with provision for life tenancy or 25-year estates if desired. Permittee cabins would remain for the lifetime of the owner of record.

ALTERNATIVE B

Objective

To provide an alternative experience to park visitors, in contrast to the experience offered at the more highly developed areas in Sequoia and Kings Canyon, by retaining the present character and pattern of use

Strategy

This alternative proposes to maintain the current pattern, density, character, and level of public use in Mineral King by upgrading and redesigning existing development in its present locations. This alternative assumes the activities that have developed over time are the appropriate ones for Mineral King. It also assumes the facilities that have been developed to support these activities are suitably located and do not require any major reorganization.

Actions

Valley Proper: Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record

✓ Establish a backcountry quota based on trail size and lakeshore capacities

~~Reroute Sawtooth Trail~~

? Redesign parking areas and establish their capacities based on backcountry quotas

✓ Reopen Sunny Point as a walk-in campground for use by backpackers going into or coming out of the backcountry

Establish loop trails from Vista Point to points of interest in the valley proper

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Faculty Flat: Replace the ranger station in its same location

Rehabilitate the Cold Spring campground, including campsite definition, drainage improvement, and roadway surface improvement

Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record

Silver City: Maintain the existing level of accommodations and services and retain present character

Define vehicle and pedestrian circulation routes and initiate a revegetation program

Replace National Park Service trailers with structures that are architecturally compatible with the setting

Acquire private lands, granting options of life tenancy or 25-year estates if desired

Cabin Cove: Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record

Atwell Mill: Remove camping from the sequoia grove

Hammond: Provide improved information about availability of campsites, backcountry permits, and services

Road: Pave the unpaved portion to reduce dust problems

Impacts

Natural Environment: No significant impact would occur, but some minor aesthetic and organizational problems would be corrected by rehabilitating developments on their present sites. The loop trails in the valley proper would be developed along existing trails wherever possible to avoid disturbing previously unimpacted areas. Removal of camping from the sequoia grove at Atwell Mill would enhance the regeneration of this resource.

Visitor Use: As in alternative A, no change would occur in the numbers of visitors accommodated or in the types of activities provided for. Correction of aesthetic and organizational problems would enhance the visitor experience. Traditional winter use of the area would continue unchanged, with no facilities or services provided for winter visitors.

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Transportation and Access: Paving the unpaved portion of the road would reduce dust problems and correct erosion to some degree. No change in circulation patterns or access would occur.

Private Lands and Permittee Cabins: As in alternative A, private lands would be acquired with provision for life tenancy or 25-year estates if desired. Permittee cabins would remain for the lifetime of the owner of record.

ALTERNATIVE C

Objective

To enhance visitors' perceptions of a pristine alpine valley by restoring the valley proper to natural conditions

Strategy

This alternative provides for the eventual removal of all facilities from Mineral King Valley back to Faculty Flat, and the restoration of the valley proper to pristine conditions. The functions removed would be absorbed in other areas within Mineral King. As in alternative B, the existing density, character, and level of public use would be maintained; however, there would be major rehabilitation and reorganization of existing facilities and use patterns to enhance visitor experiences, improve circulation, and restore certain select developed areas to natural conditions.

Actions

Valley Proper:

Establish a backcountry quota based on existing trail size and lakeshore capacities

Reroute Sawtooth Trail

Do not renew permittee cabin leases as they expire; restore sites to natural conditions

Terminate road at Faculty Flat

Remove and relocate parking areas and pack station

Develop major trail from Faculty Flat to Vista Point at the edge of the valley proper

Establish loop trails to points of interest

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Faculty Flat: Develop as a major trailhead and public contact area

Phase out permittee cabins as necessary to provide space for functions relocated from the valley proper

Replace the ranger station

Develop day-use and long-term parking areas

Develop pack station if space permits

~~Develop daytime picnic areas~~

Rehabilitate the Cold Spring campground, including campsite definition, drainage improvement, and roadway surface improvement

Establish walk-in campsites for use by backpackers going into or coming out of the backcountry

Silver City: Continue existing level of accommodations and services and retain present character with minor upgrading of existing facilities

Reorganize development to improve circulation and foster vegetation growth

Acquire private land; adaptively use selected cabins for housing, lodging, hostels, or programs, and restore other sites to natural conditions or convert to camping areas

Develop an NPS housing and maintenance area

Cabin Cove: Permit cabins to remain for the lifetime of the owner of record

Atwell Mill: ~~Phase out camping as sites becomes available in the Silver City area~~

Provide interpretation of history and the regenerating sequoia grove

Hammond: Provide improved information about availability of campsites, backcountry permits, and services

Road: Pave the unpaved portion to reduce dust problems

Impacts

Natural Environment: Some alteration to the natural environment would occur as a result of implementing this alternative. The eventual removal of all facilities from the

2023.009.0314 N

valley proper would return this area to natural conditions. Relocation of parking and pack station facilities would commit additional lands in Faculty Flat to development for these uses. It is anticipated that most relocated facilities would be developed on previously impacted sites. Rehabilitation and construction activities would result in localized impacts on vegetation, soils, and wildlife habitat.

Visitor Use: As in alternatives A and B, the numbers of visitors and types of activities would remain unchanged. Relocation and removal of facilities from the valley proper would provide an accessible natural area for visitor use. Traditional winter use of the area would continue unchanged, with no facilities or services provided for winter visitors.

Transportation and Access: Impacts would be similar to those occurring in alternative B, except that termination of the road at Faculty Flat would deny vehicular access into the valley proper.

Private Lands and Permittee Cabins: Implementation of this alternative would result in the removal of most permittee cabins from the valley proper and Faculty Flat. It would also direct the adaptive use of several summer cabins in Faculty Flat and Silver City. Permittee cabins at Cabin Cove would remain for the lifetime of the owner of record.

ALTERNATIVE D

Objective

To expand public use opportunities by developing Mineral King as a major year-round attraction of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Strategy

This alternative suggests major modification of the existing pattern and character of development. It would direct major development to accommodate a larger and more diverse visitor population by increasing the capacity of the access road and offering more extensive visitor services and accommodations than presently are offered.

Actions

Valley Proper: Terminate the road and provide a small day parking area at the edge of the valley proper (Vista Point)

Do not renew permittee cabin leases as they expire; adaptively use cabins or restore sites to natural conditions

Establish day-use loop trails originating from Vista Point

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Remove roads, parking areas, and pack station

Increase backcountry trail quotas and intensively manage the backcountry

Develop cross-country ski trails

Faculty Flat: Develop as major backcountry trailhead and public contact area

Phase out permittee cabins as necessary to provide space for functions relocated from the valley proper

Replace the ranger station and expand its function to include interpretation

Develop a long-term parking area

Develop a pack station if space permits

Develop picnic areas with associated parking

Rehabilitate the Cold Spring campground, including higher density campsite definition, drainage improvements, and roadway surface improvements

Expand camping in the vicinity of Mosquito Creek

Establish walk-in campsites for use by backpackers going into or coming out of the backcountry

Develop cross-country ski trails

Silver City: Provide a full range of accommodations and services

Provide a range of year-round accommodations and services to facilitate winter use of the area

Redevelop existing lodge site as a village center, providing higher density lodging, expanded market and food service, and programs

Acquire private land; adaptively use cabins for housing, lodging, hostels, or programs

Develop an NPS/concessioner housing and maintenance area

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Cabin Cove:	Phase out permittee cabins
	Provide a rest stop and picnicking area and enhance views to the southeast with selective cutting
	Develop cross-country ski trails
Atwell Mill:	Remove camping from the sequoia grove
	Provide interpretation of history and regenerating sequoia grove
	Develop cross-country ski trails
Hammond:	Develop a contact station for information and fee collection
Road:	Improve access to accommodate a larger volume of visitors
	Examine options for winter access, including plowing the road and allowing oversnow transportation

Impacts

Natural Environment: This alternative would result in significant modification to the natural environment for road construction and facility development. Road improvements and an enlarged volume of traffic would result in a loss of natural character and also increased noise and air pollution. Construction activities would have a greater impact on soils, vegetation, and wildlife habitat relative to the previous alternatives.

Visitor Use: This alternative suggests that Mineral King could be a complementary attraction of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. As a result, the area would accommodate an increased number of visitors and provide a full range of visitor services. Opportunities for winter use would be greatly expanded by the provision of year-round accommodations and services.

Transportation and Access: Redevelopment of the Mineral King road would increase its capacity and improve safety conditions. Implementation of this action would be a major expense.

Private Lands and Permittee Cabins: This alternative would require the acquisition of all private land, and permittee cabin leases would not be renewed.

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, and parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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